

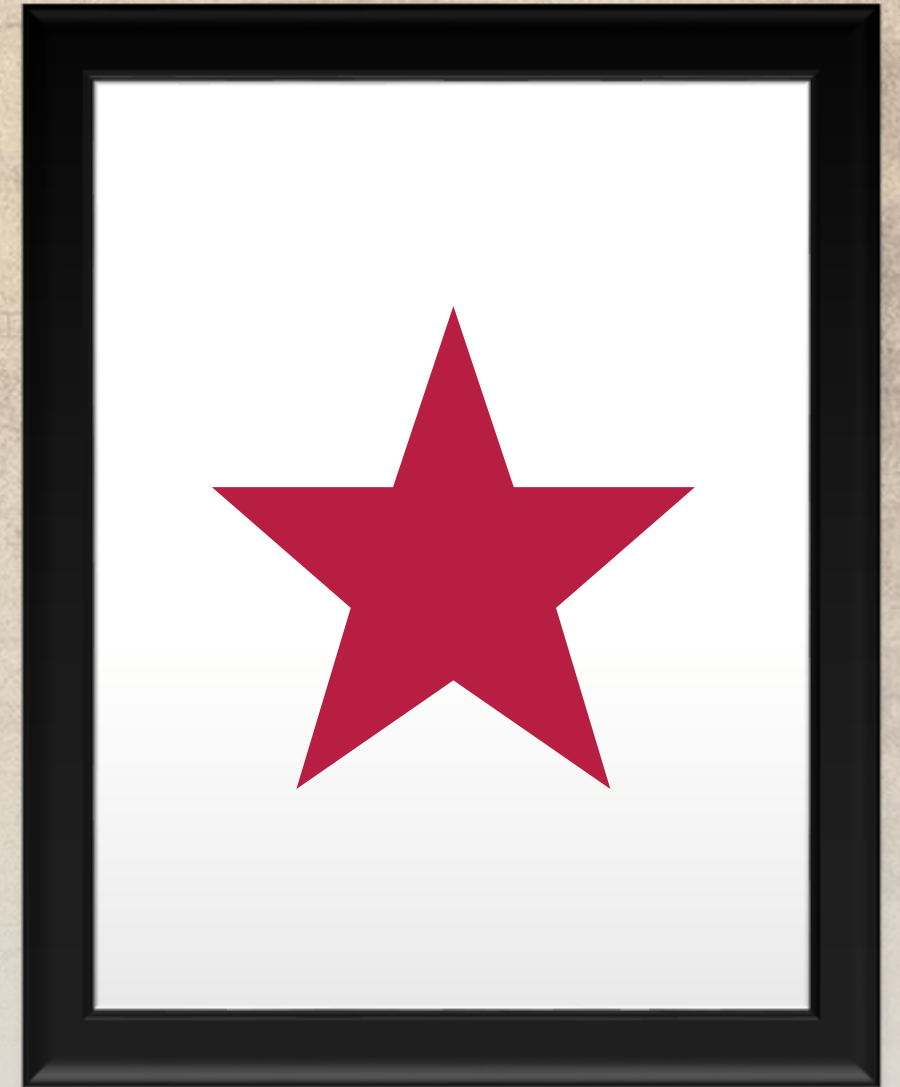
PRACTICAL ISSUES FACED BY MCA'S

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AGENDA



- Introduction
- Overview
- Value Added Experiences
- Assumptions
- Case Studies and Discussion
- Wrap up

WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?



OVERVIEW

- **WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?**
- Someone who strongly supports an idea, cause or a person. “She is an advocate for environmental protection.”
- Someone who helps ensure another person’s voice is heard, especially if they need support. “A patient advocate helps people understand their healthcare options.
- **DO YOU KNOW HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR ROLE TO STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS?**



ADVOCATES HAVE POWERFUL VOICES!



WHAT DO MILITARY ADVOCATES BRING TO CAMPUS? ****VALUE ADDED FOR ALL STUDENTS****

- **Support for transition to civilian and academic life**

Veterans and service members may be adjusting from highly structured military environments to less structured academic settings. Advocates can help with orientation, campus integration, and connecting students to resources.

- **Understanding military culture**

Military students sometimes feel isolated because classmates and faculty may not understand deployments, service obligations, combat experiences, or military family life. Advocates provide culturally informed support and help educate the broader campus community.

WHAT DO MILITARY ADVOCATES BRING TO CAMPUS? ****VALUE ADDED FOR ALL STUDENTS****

- **Navigation of benefits and policies**

Programs like the GI Bill, tuition assistance, disability accommodations, and transfer credit for military training can be complicated. Advocates help students avoid administrative barriers that could delay graduation or create financial stress.

- **Mental health and wellness support**

Some veterans or military-connected students may experience stress, anxiety, trauma, or reintegration difficulties. Advocates can connect them with counseling services and reduce stigma around seeking help.

WHAT DO MILITARY ADVOCATES BRING TO CAMPUS?

****VALUE ADDED FOR ALL STUDENTS****

- Support for military families and dependents**

Spouses and children of service members may also attend college while balancing relocations, caregiving, or deployment-related stress. Advocates recognize those needs and help create family-friendly support systems.

- Retention and academic success**

Students who feel understood and supported are more likely to stay enrolled and complete their degrees. Military advocates often improve persistence and graduation outcomes for military-affiliated students.

WHAT DO MILITARY ADVOCATES BRING TO CAMPUS? ****VALUE ADDED FOR ALL STUDENTS****

***Building an inclusive campus climate**

Military-connected students bring leadership, discipline, global experience, and diverse perspectives. Advocates help ensure those experiences are respected and included in campus life rather than overlooked.

ASSUMPTIONS



STUDENTS WANT YOU TO

- Know about resources
- Know how to find things
- Share information
- Be accurate

**Identify skills you would like to learn by having this role!

SUPERVISORS/LEADS WANT YOU TO.....

- Learn resources
- Share information with students and with them as they too want to learn about military connected current issues
- Network
- Do something; embrace the role! (lay foundation or complete project/event)

EMBRACE THE ROLE.... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



PROJECT

- On-going development, work, and planning...lay the foundation.
- These may be more needs based...where are gaps in campus services or experiences?

EVENT

- One time or a developed tradition
- Social (fun and builds community)
- Educational (shares info to build skill or knowledge)
- Events can be BIG or small.....we have students that prefer 1:1 vs. group events

PERSONAL WAYS TO ADVOCATE

PRESENT at department or faculty meeting.

INTRODUCE yourself to others at programs you attend.

CONNECT people at programs.

LEARN about military populations other than yours.

ADVERTISE upcoming events...yours and others.

BUILD your community – by knowing about others, you can connect them when opportunities come up. **SHARE RESOURCES.**

NORMALIZE conversations about transitions from military to academic life.

INVITE others to participate in events both large and small.

WEAR your nametag at events/while in office.

STEP outside your comfort zone. We are advocating for a wide range of people....**NOT** just those with **YOUR** same experiences.

LEARN the answers.....don't just refer.

SHARE your story.

VISIT the Veterans Lounge (if one is available).

CASE STUDIES – ROUND I

5 minutes then report out

How would you work with the student?

Is there an opportunity for a project or a program and if so, what's the general concept?



CASE ONE

- A new undergrad student who is a military dependent approaches you on campus and recognized you from a welcome event for new military connected students where you were introduced as an Advocate. They want to know how to use their benefits. You are a U.S.Army veteran in your last year. How do you proceed?

CASE TWO

- There is a study area for Science students on your campus. You are there and you overhear a military student you know **RANTING LOUDLY** about how hard the low level Physics class is that she is currently taking. How do you proceed? Bonus Info: You don't know what year the student is, but your roommate is also a Senior and a Physics major.

CASE THREE

- A military student opens up to you that school is way harder than he thought it was going to be. He doesn't mind being in school, and it is mostly covered financially by benefits, but the classes are not interesting and there is way too much “busy work”? How do you respond?

CASE FOUR

- In your last year on campus, you are serving as an Advocate. You are working in the Military Office. A couple comes to the office, one of them will be a military-connected student in the upcoming semester. While the new student is working with your benefits rep, the spouse says to you , “What are three pieces of advice for my wife who is newly retired from the military and just starting her Bachelors’ degree?”

CASE FIVE

- As an MCA, a military connected student talks to you about “finding their people” on campus. They don’t have a lot of free time, as their major involves lots of studying and project work, but they want the full college experience. What suggestions would you offer to them?

CASE STUDIES – DEEPER DIVE

8 minutes then report out

A large, 3D, golden number 2 is centered within a black rectangular frame. The number has a metallic sheen and a slight shadow, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The frame is simple and black, contrasting with the white background inside it.

ADDRESS THESE ISSUES...

- *How do you work with the student?
- *Is it likely that others have the same issue?
- *How can you move the issue forward on your campus?

CASE SIX

Taylor, a military student confides in you that they are struggling....at home, in class, at work. They feel like there isn't enough time to be successful at everything and therefore feel they aren't good at anything. They do comment to you that maybe going to school might have been a mistake and maybe they shouldn't be here.

CASE SIX - CONSIDERATIONS

*Is this an emergency? If yes, dial 911/988.

*If not an emergency....

*Do they know their academic advisor or how to find them?

*Have they visited with a career counselor (maybe they are not in the right major?)

*Are they familiar with personal counseling on campus (how to make an appointment, do they want someone to go with them to the building – not IN the appt., do they know that an appointment will not be reported to the military, do they know the fee structure for the appointment (if any).

CASE SEVEN

You are an Advocate, and it took a lot of convincing for you to seek help from your campus Disability Support Services office, but you finally got there, and you feel good about the support you are receiving. You overhear two military students talking in the lounge and they both are commiserating that neither feels like they take tests very well. How do you proceed?

CASE SEVEN - CONSIDERATIONS

- *Are you willing to share your story of going to the Disability Services Office?
- *Do you know what services are available on campus and how to get an appointment?
- *Are you familiar with the predominant disability that occurs amongst military students?
- *What would stop a military connected student from using the services available.....how do we help them overcome?
- *What outreach is provided to any student about using the services of this office?
Anything special for military students?

CASE EIGHT

It's the first week of class, and Nina, a fellow military spouse mentioned to you that their faculty member for a math class introduced himself on the first day and mentioned that this class was the part 2 of high school Calculus, that "everyone had last year". She has not been in a math class in 10 years, as she supported military missions through accompanying her spouse on international postings. How do you proceed with Nina? Should there be follow up with the faculty member? If yes, who should do that follow up?

CASE EIGHT - CONSIDERATIONS

*Is Nina comfortable in speaking to the faculty member? If yes, does she mention the comment (in process educating the faculty member that not “everyone” had Calculus last year.) Does she speak with the faculty member and just ask for help vs. educating them on the comment?

*Does your military office ever do an educational training workshop for faculty/departments or have a handout for any faculty. Should they? How could you make that happen?

*Are there other examples that are specific that you have heard of that could also be part of a faculty workshop....what would you want faculty to know about the military community (veteran and those currently serving).

CASE NINE

Harper, one of your military friends showed you their resume. She served for 8 years, and you were surprised that they had very little listed about that experience. When you asked her about it, she said “there are so many parts of my job in the military that I don’t want to talk about” and the other parts no civilian will ever understand what I did, so why bother?”

CASE NINE - CONSIDERATIONS

- *What does/did Harper do in the military?
- *Are you familiar with any resume writing resources on campus?
- *Is there an office or person that specializes in working with military students on this issue – translating experiences?
- *If there was a workshop about this topic, what would you want to see included, how would you get people to attend?

CASE TEN

You met Kelly last year and have built a good relationship with her. She always knows about campus events that have free food (pizza, snacks, etc.). She has also asked to borrow a few bucks to get lunch a couple of times, and has paid you back at the beginning of the month. You do notice that from time to time she is sluggish and crabby, but you are like that from time to time also. Would you chat with Kelly about this and if so, what do you say? What are your concerns about Kelly?

CASE TEN CONSIDERATIONS

- *Is she experiencing food insecurity? Is this on a regular basis?
- *Do you know of campus/local resources for food for students or community members?
- *Are there any military resources available to assist this student on or off campus?
- *Does campus dining offer any type of discount for students that pre-pay for a dining plan?
- *Does any kind of financial office offer a budgeting program for students/veterans?
- *What else is happening with Kelly that may play into this? Is there a willingness to talk with someone in Counseling Center to support this student in a variety of ways?

BONUS CASE FOR ALL

You are a student and an MCA. You are also a 40 year old veteran, and an Education major in your last year. You are picking up a low level class in Sociology to fulfill graduation requirements. In the first few weeks of the new school year, you are assigned a group project with 3 “traditional age” students. The group wants to start meeting at 9 p.m. on campus. That doesn’t fit with your schedule given you have a spouse and young children at home, a full-time job, and additional obligations in the community. Do your classmates realize the potential impact of non-traditional students/adult learners on campus? How much of your story do you share with your group, if anything? What do you share?

WRAP UP

Connect people to others.

Connect people to resources.

The right information at the right time can be very valuable to someone.

Look at the bigger picture --- is there potential to string experiences together to assess need.

Always look to learn.

Always look to share.

Use your strengths....but look to develop new skills

THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY!

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